

PATRICK J. HOGAN
Legislative District 39
Montgomery County

Vice Chairman
Budget and Taxation Committee

Chairman
Education, Business, and
Administration Subcommittee

Senate Chair
Joint Committee on Children,
Youth, and Families



The Senate of Maryland

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401-1991

Annapolis 6 District Office

3 West Miller Senate Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1991
301-858-3686 • 410-841-3686

1-800-492-7122 Ext. 3686

Fax 410-841-3670

E-Mail Patrick_Hogan@senate.state.md.us

July 12, 2005

Chief, Regulations & Procedures Division
Alcohol & Tobacco Tax & Trade Bureau
ATTN: Notice No. 41
P.O. Box 14412
Washington DC 20044-4412

Dear Chief:

I understand that current federal alcohol beverage label regulations do not allow most beer, wine and distilled spirits companies to provide information about their products so that consumers can make informed choices about what to drink and how much to drink. I commend the Alcohol & Tobacco Tax and Trade (TTB) for seeking public comment on this proposed change in regulations.

Food, soft drinks, over-the-counter drugs, and even dietary supplements provide consumers with basic consumer information on the label. Alcohol beverages (with some exceptions) are the only major class of consumable goods that do not provide this type of information on the label. TTB should allow labels voluntarily to list information such as serving size and servings per container, as well as alcohol, calories, fat, carbohydrates and protein per serving.

Of all this information, the amount of alcohol per serving would be highly beneficial for consumers to have. Allowing placement of information on alcohol per serving and servings per container on beer, wine and distilled spirits labels will help consumers to better understand the government's advice. In fact, given the wide variety of formulations, container sizes and alcohol concentrations in today's products, and the regulatory disparities as to what information may be placed on beer, wine and distilled spirits labels, some consumers might welcome more information about how particular products relate to the *Guidelines'* advice.

Consumer Serving Facts will be more meaningful if TTB makes clear in this rulemaking what constitutes a "serving." This is the essential fact that will allow consumers to make more informed comparisons between products and better understand what is in a standard serving of any alcohol beverage.

The standard serving definition used in the *Dietary Guidelines* (12 ounces of regular beer, 5 ounces of table wine and 1.5 ounces of 80 proof distilled spirits) is one widely used by U.S. government agencies, public health groups, consumer groups, and a majority of state driver's license manuals. It makes sense to use the same definition as the benchmark for labels.

I respectfully urge TTB to act expeditiously to promulgate a regulation that permits meaningful consumer-oriented Serving Facts on beer, wine and spirits labels. Meanwhile, I urge TTB to allow manufacturers to provide this kind of truthful, non-misleading information on labels while the rulemaking process proceeds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Patrick J. Hogan", is written over the typed name and title.

Patrick J. Hogan
Maryland State Senator